

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06478 01 OF 02 211413Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-13 SSO-00 /071 W

----- 089431

R 211222Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1259

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 6478

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: SHIITE LEADER WOULD SUPPORT MARONITES

1. SUMMARY: SHIITE POLITICAL FIGURE MUHSIN SLIM DETESTS
ROLE PALESTINIANS HAVE PLAYED IN LEBANON AND IS CONFIDENT
SYRIANS TOGETHER WITH MARONITES, WILL OVERCOME THEM. WHILE SYRIA
WANTS TO MAINTAIN LEBANESE NATIONAL INTEGRITY, SYRIANS HAVE BEEN
INEPT IN HANDLING LEBANESE SITUATION. THEIR ROLE
WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE IF THEY WOULD ENCOURAGE EGYPTIAN
INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON AS GUARANTOR OF MOSLEM INTERSTS.
SHIITES HAVE SHIFTED FROM SUPPORT OF PALESTINIANS TO
COMPLETE HOSTILITY, AND SUNNIS ARE INCREASINGLY DISAFFECTED
AS WELL. PLO IS NOW DOMINATED BY REJECTIONISTS. JUNBLATT
OWES HIS PRESSNT INFLUENCE ENTIRELY TO ALLIANCE WITH
PALESTINIANS. MOEMENT IS RIPE, IN SLIM'S VIEW, FOR MARONITE
POLITICAL GESTURE WHICH WILL GAIN SUPPORT OF MOST NON-
MARONITE LEBANESE, TRANSFORMING EXISTING KFOUR MARONITE
FRONT INTO AUTHENTIC "LEBANESE FRONT." THROUGH SAUDI
ARABIA, US CAN INFLUENCE SYRIANS AND CHRISTIANS.
END SUMMARY.

2. LEADING SHIITE COMMUNITY LEADER, FORMER DEPUTY AND
PROOMINENT ATTORNEY MUHSIN SLIM PAID CALL ON ME JULY
20.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 06478 01 OF 02 211413Z

3. SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANESE MOSLEM PERSPECTIVE. SLIM SAID HE HAD TOLD SPECIAL ENVOY DEAN BROWN SYRIAN INTERVENTION HAD TO BE ON TWO TRACKS: MILITARY AND POLITICAL. PROBLEM WAS THAT SYRIAN POLITICAL MOVES IN LEBANON WERE ILL-ADVISED. THEY TALKED TO SUNNI LEADERSHIP (KARAME ET AL), BUT DID NOT REALIZE THERE IS GAP BETWEEN SUNNI LEADERS AND SUNNI POPULATION. AS RESULT, SUNNIS NOW DO NOT SUPPORT SYRIAN INTERVENTION. ASSAD REGIME IS PERCEIVED AS ALAWITE AND NOT SUPPORTIVE OF SUNNI INTERESTS. (THIS, HE NOTED, IS REVERSAL F ATTITUDES AROUND 1920, WHEN SUNNIS OPPOSED FRENCH MANDATE AND SOUGHT UNION WITH SYRIA.) NEVERTHELESS, SLIM SAID HE IS ADVISING RASHID KARAME, ABDULL TDFMFI AND OTHERS TO COOPERATE WITH SYRIANS, SINCE LATTER ENJOY OVERWHELMING SUPPORT OF ARAB WORLD (EXCEPT IRAQ, WHICH IS OFFSET BY IRAN, AND LIBYA, WHICH DOESN'T MATTER). HE NOTED THAT AFI JULY 20 IN DAMASCUS HAD SPOKEN IN FAVOR OF SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT. IN ADDITION TO SYRIAN POLITICAL AND MILITARY TRACKS, A THIRD ELEMENT IS NEEDED: EGYPT SHOULD JOIN SYRIAN EFFORT, AS OUARANTOR OF MOSLEM INTERESTS. THIS IS IMPORTANT ESPECIALLY SINCE TRADITIONAL MOSLEM LEADERS HAVE LOST MUCH POPULAR SUPPORT, AND KARAME WAS PERSONALLY IN LARGE PART RESPONSIBLE, FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER, FOR SITUATION IN WHICH LEBANESE ARMY BACKED AWAY FROM ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO CONTROL PALESTINIANS. HE SAID THAT UNDER STRONGLEADERSHIP ARMY WOULD HAVE NEVER SPLIT. IN ANY CASE, HE CONTENDED, SUNNI ELEMENT IN ARMY IS RELATIVELY SMALL. HE IS CONVINCED THAT SYRIA WANTS TO MAINTAIN LEBANESE NATIONAL INTEGRITY.

4. LEBANESE MOSLEM ATTITUDE TOWARDS PALESTINIANS. SLIM SAID THAT SHIITES ORGINALLY SUPPORTED PALESTINIANS, BUT HAVE BY NOW BECOME TOTALLY HOSTILE. EVERY SUNNI FAMILY, TOO, IS AT LEAST "UNHAPPY" WITH PALESTINIANS. TOGETHER WITH CHRISTIAN MILITARY STRENGTH, AND SYRIAN INTERVENTION, THIS MEANS PALESTINIANS ARE FINISHED IN LEBANON. SLIM IS CONVINCED THAT PALESTINIANS WANT THEIR OWN STATE-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 06478 01 OF 02 211413Z

WITHIN-A-STATE N LEBANON, SINCE THEY KNOW THAT A WEST BANK STATE WOULD NOT BE VIABLE. ALTHOUGH ARAFAT PERSONALLY HAS SPOKEN AGAINST THE IDEA OF A PALESTINIAN ROLE IN LEBANON, HE IS TODAY TOTALLY DOMINATED BY REJECTIONISTS.

5. JUNBLATT'S ROLE. SLIM HAS ALWAYS DISLIKED JUNBLATT, WHO MADE OPPORTUNISTIC ALLIANCE WITH

COMMUNISTS, PALESTINIANS AND BAATHIS. HE SHOULD BE REGARDED MERELY AS ONE DRUZE LEADER. HE GAINED IMPORTANCE ONLY THROUGH PALESTINIANS. HE HAS NO INFLUENCE AMONG SHIITES AND SUNNIS. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION WHETHER A FUTURE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT JUNBLATT WERE POSSIBLE, SLIM EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT SYRIANS WOULD PUT HIM IN HIS PROPER PLACE AS A DRUZE LEADER. ASSAD, HE SAID, DISLIKES AND DISTRUSTS HIM.

6. CURRENT MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS. SLIM SAID TELL ZAATAR HAS FALLEN. NAABA WILL BE NEXT. HE SAIDDOF SOME 250,000 SHIITES FORMERLY LIVING IN NAABA ONLY SOME 10,000 REMAIN. CHRISTIANS WILL THEN TAKE OVER BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. WAR WILL BE OVER WHEN WEST BEIRUT IS "LIBERATED." HE AGREED WITH MY HYPOTHESIS THAT, IF PALESTINIANS WER OFFERED FACE-SAVING FORMULA, THEY MIGHT ABANDON WEST BEIRUT VOLUNTARILY, BUT HE ENVISIONED A "SEMI-MILITARY" SOLUTION IN WEST BEIRUT.

7. CHRISTIAN POLITICAL STRATEGY. SLIM SAID HE WAS IN TOUCH WITH CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND WAS URGING THEM TO TRANSFORM THEIR PRESENT "MARONITE FRONT" INTO A "LEBANESE FRONT," WITH GREEK ORTHODOX, ARMENIAN, SHIITE, AND DRUZE REPRESENTATION. GRADUALLY IT MIGHT BECOME POSSIBLE TO PERSUADE SUNNIS TO JOIN. HE IS CONVINCED THAT AT LEAST GREEK ORTHODOX, ARMENIANS,AND SHIITES ON BOTH SIDES OF CONFRONTATION LINE WOULD SPONTANEOUSLY SUPPORT IT.

8. OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE. SUMMING UP HIS OWN POSITION, SLIM SAID HE WOULD NEVER AGREE TO COMPROMISE WITH CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 06478 01 OF 02 211413Z

JUNBLATT OR WITH PALESTINIANS. HE SPOKE OF TWO BASIC STEPS WHICH HE SAID AMBASSADOR MELOY HAD SUPPORTED: 1) A "CONSEILLE D'URGENCE," SUCH AS HAD RULED FRANCE BEFORE LOUIS XIV CAME OF AGE; AND 2) LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN COEXISTENCE. HOWEVER, SLIM SAID COEXISTENCE WITH PALESTINIANS WAS IMPOSSIBLE: IN FIVE YEARS THEY WOULD NUMBER 1,000,000 IN LEBANON. RATHER THAN COEXISTENCE, SLIM HOPES SYRIA WILL "PUT THE PALESTINIANS IN THE REFRIGERATOR". LEBANESE STATE AND ARMY MUST BE RECONSTITUTED. SAUDIS, WHO HAVE FINANCIAL MEANS, HAVE ALREADYPLEDGED THEIR SUPPORT TO SARKIS.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 06478 02 OF 02 211353Z

43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-13 SSO-00 /071 W

----- 089162

R 211222Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1260

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 6478

9. US ROLE. SLIM SAID THAT SPECIAL ENVOY BROWN HAD SPOKEN OF IMPORTANCE OF ELECTING A PRESIDENT WHO COULD REUNITE GREAT MAJORITY OF LEBANESE. SINCE EDDE WAS MORE CONTROVERSIAL TO AN SARKIS, SLIM SAID, MANY LEBANESE POLITICIANS DREW CONCLUSION THAT US SUPPORTED SARKIS AND VOTED FOR HIM ACCORDINGLY. IN PRESENT SITUATION, SLIM THINKS US COULD HELP SYRIANS TO MANEUVER POLITICALLY IN LEBANON MORE EFFECTIVELY. WHEN I OBSERVED THAT USG HAD LITTLE INFLUENCE WITH SYRIANS, HE AGREED BUT SAID WE COULD WORK THROUGH SAUDI ARABIA. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT WE COULD PERSUADE CAMILLE CHAMOUN TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE SO AS TO BROADEN KFOUR "MARONITE FRONT" TO A TRUE "LEBANESE FRONT" AND WORK TOGETHER WITH MOSLEMS, GREEK ORTHODOX, ARMENIANS, AND DRUZE. WE SHOULD ALSO PRESSURE KFOUR PEOPLE ALONG THIS LINE THROUGH THE SYRIANS.. WHEN I NOTED PROBLEMS IN MY GETTING ACROSS TO OTHER SIDE, HE SAID INSECURITY OF CROSSING CONFRONTATION LINE COULD BE EASILY OVERCOME BY ADVANCE PREPARATION AND COORDINATION WITH MURABITOUN (QULAYLAT), FATAH, AND HIS OWN PEOPLE.

10. COMMENT: LIKE SO MANY LEBANESE POLITICIANS, SLIM SEEMS TO THINK THAT IF THE US WAVES A MAGIC WAND, LEBANESE PROBLEMS CAN BE RESOLVED. HIS HATRED OF THE PALESTINIANS IS OBVIOUSLY BIASED AND INTENSE, BUT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 06478 02 OF 02 211353Z

HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE SYRIAN PAST ROLE AND OBJECTIVES
RINGS TRUE. HIS REFLECTION OF GROWING LEBANESE
MOSLEM DISAFFECTION FOR THE PALESTINIANS CONFIRMS
NUMEROUS OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE BEEN GETTING. HIS
PROPOSITION THAT THE KFOUR FRONT OUGHT TO CAPITALIZE
ON THIS MAY SOUND ODD COMING FROM A SHIITE
POLITICIAN LIVING IN WEST BEIRUT, BUT IT UNDERLINES
THE POLITICAL AS WELL AS MILITARY STRENGTH OF THE
CURRENT CHRISTIAN POSITION AND THE UNDERLYING DISARRAY
IN THE PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST CAMP.
SEELYE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONAL OPINION, INTERVENTION, PALESTINIANS, CIVIL DISORDERS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT06478
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760280-0808
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760738/aaaabhfl.tel
Line Count: 237
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SHIITE LEADER WOULD SUPPORT MARONITES
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY, (SLIM, MUHSIN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006